

## Chapter 1

### Representations of food hawkers in Ancient Rome

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With perhaps as many as a million inhabitants at its height (c.100 BC –AD 200), Ancient Rome was the largest pre-industrial city in the Western world.<sup>1</sup> Feeding this considerable population was a mammoth task and a complex distribution network developed in order to ensure a regular supply of food in the city; food hawkers were a central component of this distribution network and no doubt a common sight on the streets of the city. Yet street trade is by its very nature ephemeral, and given the organic nature of the goods sold, food hawking in particular would leave little trace in the archaeological record. Compared to some of the cities considered in this volume then, the evidence for food hawking in ancient Rome is partial and somewhat sketchy. Nevertheless, the presence of hawkers in the city can be inferred from a variety of surviving material, including literary and legal sources, together with artistic representations of food vendors. As is so often the case, however, this ancient material is far from documentary evidence of the past. Ancient literature and art present images or representations of hawkers that are constructed according to the context, genre, and intended audience of the material in question.

This chapter begins by placing the evidence for food hawking in Rome into the wider context of the urban economy. This is done through a study of comparative material drawn from better-documented cities, which indicates that the phenomenon of street selling is intrinsically linked to the wider social and economic environment in which such vendors operate, and in particular,

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Roy Gibson, Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe, and the editors for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. For details of any of the ancient authors cited in this chapter, see relevant entries in Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 2012).

to the availability of work in urban centres. After establishing that the social, economic, and demographic conditions of Rome would likely have encouraged the widespread presence of food hawkers in the city, the chapter goes on to explore the various types of evidence for such hawkers in more depth. It begins with written descriptions, before going on to look at visual portrayals of vendors; it considers what this material suggests not only about food hawkers, but also about how these traders were viewed by those who created this material. Not all the representations are drawn directly from the city of Rome - some refer to Italy and the wider Roman world - but all can be taken as illustrative of the place of food hawkers in Rome, where the greater size of the population and the particular conditions of the labour market most likely resulted in higher numbers of vendors thronging the streets. The chapter thus argues that despite the partial nature of our evidence, food hawkers were an integral part of the distribution network in Rome, and must have been a very visible, audible, and striking feature of the streets and public spaces of the ancient city.

### **Food hawkers and the urban economy; a comparative perspective**

To a certain extent, the presence of food hawkers in antiquity is hardly surprising, since such traders were a characteristic feature of pre-industrial retail. Indeed, as Calaresu notes, most Italians continued to buy, and very often to eat, their food on the street well into the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Mediterranean climate of Italy and many other areas of the Roman empire encouraged a culture of outdoor living; in Rome, for example, winters could be cold, but they were generally short and the climate was conducive to living – and thus trading – outside, especially if there were spaces that were shaded from the sun. There were, however, a series of more complex factors related to the particular social, economic, and demographic structure of Rome that encouraged the spread of food hawkers in the city.

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter 5 in this volume.

In the late Republic and early empire in particular, ancient Rome was a centre of migration. In the first century BC, Italians flocked to the city in large numbers; the motivation for this population movement is disputed and much discussed, but the growth in the urban population was rapid, with estimates ranging from an average of 5,000 to 10,000 new migrants per year over the course of the century.<sup>3</sup> Seasonal mobility within Italy also caused the population of the city to swell at certain times of the year.<sup>4</sup> The population of Rome may well have reached as many as one million in the first century BC, a staggering figure for a pre-industrial city and one not reached again in the western world until London in around 1800.<sup>5</sup> With a high mortality rate typical of pre-industrial urban populations, Rome relied on continual structural migration to maintain this population until at least the late second century AD, with the imperial city drawing people from a much larger Mediterranean-wide hinterland. This large and constantly-changing population had a significant impact upon many areas of life in the city.

Rome was, for example, very densely populated. Space was at a premium and many people lived in cramped accommodation, packed into overcrowded, multi-storey apartment

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<sup>3</sup> Migration to Rome is discussed in more detail in Claire Holleran, 'Migration and the Urban Economy of Rome', in Claire Holleran and April Pudsey (eds.), *Demography and the Graeco-Roman World. New Insights and Approaches* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 155-80. For 10,000 migrants *p.a.*, see Neville Morley, *Metropolis and Hinterland: the City of Rome and the Italian Economy, 200 BC* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 43-44; for 5,000 migrants *p.a.*, see Walter Scheidel, 'Human Mobility in Roman Italy I: the Free Population', *Journal of Roman Studies* 94 (2004), p. 17. See also Paul Erdkamp, 'Mobility and Migration in Italy in the Second Century BC', in De Ligt, L. and Northwood, S.J. (eds.) *People, Land and Politics: Demographic Developments and the Transformation of Roman Italy, 300 BC - AD 14* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 440-444.

<sup>4</sup> See Cameron Hawkins, 'Labour and Employment', in Paul Erdkamp (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 339-46. For Italian mobility in the second century BC, see Erdkamp, 'Mobility and Migration', pp. 424-33.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion of the population figures for Rome, see Elio Lo Cascio, 'La popolazione', in Elio Lo Cascio (ed.), *Roma imperiale: una metropoli antica* (Rome, 2000), pp. 17-69.

blocks. Conditions were doubtless grim for many residents, particularly those who lived on the upper floors, where lodgings apparently worsened.<sup>6</sup> When they were not sleeping, residents must have preferred to spend their time elsewhere, primarily outside on the streets and in the public spaces of the city. Cooking facilities within apartment blocks were also limited, and although residents could cook on portable braziers, many probably relied primarily on cook shops or street vendors to provide them with cooked food. The streets thus became an extension of the home; it was here that people ate their meals, rolled dice and played board games scratched into pavements, made offerings at neighbourhood shrines, collected water at basins, and gossiped on street corners. Food hawkers were very much a part of this world, and they must have jostled for space with a myriad of other users of the street, including a wide variety of other workers, such as barbers, teachers, prostitutes, fortune tellers, and beggars.<sup>7</sup>

The structure of the urban economy was such that there were also many people on the streets searching for casual employment. In fact, comparative evidence drawn from other better-documented cities suggests that there was probably a significant overlap between this group and the food hawkers in Rome. This can be indicated by drawing parallels between ancient Rome, nineteenth-century London, and Lagos, a contemporary city in the developing

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Martial, *Epigrams* 2.53.8; 3.30.3; 7.20.20 (hereafter Mart.); Suetonius, *On Grammarians* 9; Juvenal, 3.198-210. For more on housing in Rome, see John Patterson, 'Living and Dying in Rome in the City of Rome: Houses and Tombs', in Jon Coulston and Hazel Dodge (eds.), *Ancient Rome. The Archaeology of the Eternal City* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 273-76. On living conditions in Rome in general, see the (pessimistic) account by Alex Scobie, 'Slums, Sanitation and Mortality in the Roman world', *Klio* 68 (1986), pp. 399-433. See also Chris R. Whittaker, 'The Poor', in Andrea Giardina (ed.), *The Romans* (Chicago, 1993), pp. 272-299; Neville Morley, 'The Salubriousness of the Roman city', in Helen King (ed.), *Health in Antiquity* (London, 2005), pp. 192-204.

<sup>7</sup> For more on the street life of Rome, see Claire Holleran, 'Street Life in Ancient Rome', in Ray Laurence and David Newsome (eds.), *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 245-61.

world.<sup>8</sup> *Prima facie*, these comparisons may seem entirely arbitrary, but while these three cities are clearly very different, they have been selected because they share some key common characteristics. They are all exceptionally large cities by their contemporary standards; they all draw migrants on a vast scale, resulting in rapid urban growth; and they are all primarily political and administrative centres.

Intrinsically linked to these factors is another well-documented characteristic of our comparative cities: a working population that far outstrips the formal employment opportunities available. This results in a significant proportion of the population finding work within what is now classed as the informal economy; hawking food is one of the most common occupations undertaken by such workers. Henry Mayhew's remarkable work, for example, documented the lives of street traders in nineteenth-century London, and found that the majority of them sold food or drink, including fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, coffee, pies, baked potatoes, and other hot food.<sup>9</sup> The hawkers came from among the poor of the city and were by and large unable to find other work, or could not do so due to illness, age, or disability; selling was preferable to begging or the workhouse. London food hawkers were not, however, a homogenous group, but were internally stratified into a hierarchy of sellers; some of the richest traders had carts and donkeys, others had fixed stalls, while the poorest tended to sell goods from trays. Some hawkers were also indebted to other sellers or were in their employment. Others resorted to selling when other work was unavailable, such as the man interviewed by Mayhew who worked as a bricklayer's labourer in summer and a potato seller in winter.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> These parallels are developed further in Holleran, 'Migration and the Urban Economy' and Claire Holleran, *Shopping in Ancient Rome: the Retail Trade in the Late Republic and the Principate* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor, Volumes 1 and 2* (London, 1851). See also John Benson, 'Retailing', in Benson, J. and Shaw, G. (eds.) *The Retailing Industry. Volume 2: The Coming of the Mass Market* (London, 1999), pp. 132-61. For street trading as a way for the marginalised to gain an income, see also Van den Heuvel in this volume.

<sup>10</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour, Vol. 1*, p.174.

number of street traders working at any one time was therefore linked to the nature of the labour market in the city and the availability of work.

A similar picture emerges from the contemporary city of Lagos in Nigeria, where in recent years the formal employment market has failed to keep pace with the rapid population growth. At least half of the labour force is thought to work in the informal economy, with the majority relying on work as day labourers or as sellers of purchased or scavenged goods in order to make a living.<sup>11</sup> Yet entering this sector is not necessarily to be seen as a last resort; studies of contemporary food hawkers in other areas, including Hiemstra's study of Vietnamese food hawkers in this volume, indicate that it is often the result of a deliberate choice.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the informal economy is neither marginal nor peripheral, but has significant potential for job provision and income generation.<sup>13</sup> Street trading, and in particular food hawking, is popular as a means of generating an income because it offers workers relative autonomy, requires minimal initial capital investment and little technical knowledge, and can provide a decent profit. Furthermore, street traders provide an essential service, distributing food and other goods at low prices to urban residents with a low income.

An analogous situation can be posited for Rome, where the economic opportunities available were rather restricted, especially for new migrants who may not have been part of established networks in the city. The presence of slaves and freed slaves (referred to as

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Michael, P. Todaro, 'Urbanisation, Unemployment and Migration in Africa: theory and policy', *Policy Research Division Working Paper* no. 104. (New York, 1997); Amy Otchet, 'Lagos: the Survival of the Determined', *Unesco Courier* June 1999; Geoffrey I. Nwaka, 'The Urban Informal Sector in Nigeria: towards Economic Development, Environmental Health, and Social Harmony', *Global Urban Development* 1.1 (2005), 1-11. Also see Franck and Hiemstra in this volume for hawkers dominating the informal economic activity in South-East Asian countries. In Ghana, see Gracia Clark, *Onions are my Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women* (Chicago, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Chapter 7 in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> Kristina Flodman Becker, *The Informal Economy: Fact Finding Study* (SIDA, 2004).

freedmen, although including women) in particular impacted upon the work available for the freeborn in the city. The households of the elite, for example, were staffed primarily by slave or freed labour. The number of slaves owned was a clear indicator of a family's wealth and status, and domestic work was unlikely to have been widely available to the freeborn in Rome. Nor were there many administrative opportunities, since dependent members of a household were usually charged with running the houses and estates of their owners or former owners.<sup>14</sup> Slaves and freedmen dominated even within the administration of the imperial household. Dependent labour was also widely employed in production and commerce in Rome. Slaves were often trained in a craft or a skill and then employed in a workshop connected with the household; if they were manumitted, they were able to continue working as freed men in their respective crafts. This is not to say that all work in Rome was undertaken by dependent labour, but the presence of slaves and freedmen in the city undoubtedly affected the opportunities available to the freeborn. Yet there were hundreds of thousands of workers in ancient Rome at any one time. There was no benefits system to provide a safety net for those unable to work, and although free grain was distributed in the city, the amount was insufficient to feed a family and by no means all the population were eligible to receive the grain.<sup>15</sup> What then did these workers do?

This is where our comparative cities can act as valuable heuristic tools. The institutional infrastructure of Rome was unique, but residents faced similar restrictions in the availability of work to those in our comparative cities, albeit for very different reasons. Our

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Saller, 'Human capital and the growth of the Roman economy'. Version 1.0. *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics* (June, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Augustus effectively 'closed' the lists at just over 200,000 recipients in 2 BC (Augustus, *Res Gestae* 15; Suetonius, *Augustus* 40.2; Dio Cassius 55.10.1); in any case, eligibility was based on citizen status rather than need. For more on the calorific requirements met by the grain distributions, see Peter Garnsey, *Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 236.

comparative cities demonstrate the likely outcome of such a scenario, namely a reliance on casual work and the development of a significant informal economy; with particularly high rates of migration, the problem must have been especially acute in Rome of the first century BC. Thus in Rome also, many of the residents were likely to have been reliant on casual work, primarily in the building trade and portering.<sup>16</sup> Skilled and unskilled work on both public and private building projects, together with the movement of goods on and off boats or carts at the wharves or gates of the city (a particularly important task after the implementation of Caesar's ban on carts within Rome during daylight hours) absorbed many of the freeborn workers in Rome.<sup>17</sup> The urban labour market was also likely to have been linked to the agricultural calendar; workers from Rome could have been engaged seasonally in agricultural labour in the vicinity of the city, while conversely, rural labourers may have drifted to Rome to find work outside of times of high agricultural demand.<sup>18</sup>

Yet when such work was unavailable, undesirable, or physically impossible due to disability or ill health, workers in Rome must have looked for other opportunities to earn a living, and hawking was no doubt a popular option. As in our comparative cities, retailing could act as a survival strategy, absorbing the jobless and the underemployed. Food hawking was probably particularly popular, since it required little investment; fresh food could be purchased on a daily basis, suiting those whose access to capital was limited, enabling them to 're-invest' the previous day's profit. Such patterns of purchase also alleviated problems of storage, an important issue for those living in cramped lodgings. Furthermore, fresh food items such as fruit, vegetables, and prepared meals were particularly suited to sale from stalls or by ambulant

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<sup>16</sup> See for example, Peter Brunt, 'The Roman mob', *Past and Present* 35 (1966), 3-27; 'Free labour and public works in Rome', *Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (1980), pp. 81-100.

<sup>17</sup> For the law on carts, see *Tabula Heracleensis*, II. pp. 56-67.

<sup>18</sup> For workers from Rome being employed outside of the city, see Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 14.3.1. For the connection between the rural labour market and seasonal migration to Rome, see Hawkins, 'Labour and Employment'.



hawkers, since by necessity they had a quick turnover, and given the concentration of consumers in Rome, there was a guaranteed market for food items.

The comparative evidence suggests, however, that the desperate individual hawking food merely to survive is only part of the picture. Not all sellers are independent, nor are they uniformly poor; indeed, some contemporary food hawkers make a deliberate choice to enter this sector, and make decent profits. In Rome also, some food hawkers were probably successful sellers who were able to build up profitable businesses; it was presumably these workers who were able to record their occupations on funerary monuments, or commission the stone reliefs of their stalls which provide such valuable evidence of their trade. Other hawkers were in the employ of others, as in the case discussed by the legal writer Ulpian of a baker who sent out an *institor* (an agent) to sell bread elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> Cookshops also often sent out sellers to hawk hot food, thus expanding the potential market for their goods.<sup>20</sup> Some vendors may even have extended credit to other hawkers to enable them to purchase stock, a practice which is well-documented in our comparative cities.<sup>21</sup> Such agreements were probably made orally, and leave no trace in our sources, but if evidence of such arrangements were available, it is probable that we would be able to detect a complex network of credit relationships among sellers in Rome.

### **Ancient literary representations**

While the structure of the urban economy of Rome suggests that food hawkers were likely to have been commonplace in the city, the ancient evidence for their existence, and particularly

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<sup>19</sup> Ulpian, *Digest* 14.3.5.9 (hereafter Ulp. *Dig.*)

<sup>20</sup> Seneca, *Letters* 56.2; Mart. 1.41.5-10. See n.41 for sellers being sent directly to private homes also.

<sup>21</sup> In London, see, for example, Mayhew. *London Labour*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-34. In developing-world cities, see for example, Ray Bromley, 'Working in the streets: survival strategy, necessity, or unavoidable evil?', in Josef Gugler (ed.), *The Urbanisation of the Third World* (Oxford, 1988), pp.168-69; Allison MacEwan Scott MacEwan Scott, 'Who are the self-employed?', in Ray Bromley and Chris Gerry (eds.), *Casual Work and Poverty in Third World Cities* (Chichester, 1979), p.119.

for their organisation, is not always easy to find. Furthermore, the available evidence is very often flawed, presenting a stylised representation of food hawkers rather than an accurate reflection of reality. One significant factor which affects literary representations of food hawkers in particular is that there is no definitive term in either Latin or ancient Greek to denote street vendors. The figure of the hawker is relatively commonplace in literature, but the idea of such vendors is rather under-conceptualised, something which is reflected in the terminology.<sup>22</sup> Thus in Latin various generic or makeshift terminology is employed, including *ambulator*, the primary meaning of which is someone who walks about, particularly idly or for pleasure;<sup>23</sup> *circitor*, which derives from the verb *circumeo* (to go round) and has numerous meanings, including simply a person who goes round, a watchman or overseer;<sup>24</sup> *circumforaneus*, which describes movement around a forum or more generally, from town to town;<sup>25</sup> *circulator*, a term also used to describe entertainers such as jugglers, sword-swallowers, fire-eaters, snake exhibitors, and philosophers;<sup>26</sup> and finally, *institor*, a formal

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<sup>22</sup> A similar phenomenon can be seen in the figure of the flatterer or parasite; such characters are familiar in Greco-Roman literature, but can be identified by a variety of Latin and Greek terms, such as *scurra*, *captator*, *parasitos*, *kolax* and so on.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Cato, *On Agriculture* 5.2.6; Columella 1.8.7.2. As a hawker: Mart. 1.41.3.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Frontinus, *The Aqueducts of Rome* 117.1.2; Petronius, *Satyricon* 53.10 (hereafter Petr.) As hawker, Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues* 5.97 (hereafter Calp. *Ecl.*); Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.5.

<sup>25</sup> The word retains a strong sense of itinerancy, although not necessarily in reference to traders; for example, Suetonius, *Vitellius* 12.1 refers to an itinerant gladiator trainer. Also see Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 4.13; 9.4 (hereafter Apul. *Met.*). As hawkers: Cicero, *In defence of Cluentius* 40.7; Augustine, *On the Measure of the Soul* 21.36; Historia Augusta, *Commodus* 2.8.

<sup>26</sup> Celsus 5.27.3c; Seneca, *On Benefits* 6.11.2; *Letters* 29.7.1; 52.8; Apul. *Met.* 1.4; Paul, *Digest* 47.11.11.pr. (hereafter Paul. *Dig.*); Tertullian, *On the Prescription of the Heretics* 43.1; *Apology* 23.1. The term derives from the noun *circulo*, indicating the formation of circles or groups around oneself. As hawkers: Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 10.32.3; Petr. 68.6-7; Quintilian, *On Oratory* 2.4.16; 10.1.8; Mart. 10.3.2; Pliny, *Letters* 4.7.6.

legal term which primarily denotes Roman business managers.<sup>27</sup> The last term is the most formal designation of hawkers, since the other words are primarily part of the world of ‘Vulgar Latin’; as Ulpian states, *institores* are commonly known as *circitores* (*volgo circitores appellamus*).<sup>28</sup> In ancient Greek, *kapelos*, a generic term for retailers, is used to refer to hawkers.<sup>29</sup> The lack of specific terminology can make the identification of food hawkers in ancient literature difficult, since the context in which a term appears is crucial to understanding the mode of retail described. Furthermore, hawkers are not always defined by any particular term and so not all literary references can be uncovered through searches of specific words within databases, the most straightforward means of analysing the appearance of particular terms within the considerable corpus of surviving ancient literature.<sup>30</sup> Given the ambiguous nature of much of the terminology, few of the terms appear within the epigraphic record either.

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3. As hawkers, see for example: Cicero, *Philippics* 2.97; Horace, *Carmina* 3.6.30; *Epodes* 17.20; Ovid, *The Art of Love* 1.421; *Remedies for Love* 306; Propertius, 4.2.38; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 2.7.1.8; Seneca, *Letters*, 42.8; 52.15; 56.2; Quintilian, *Declamationes* 260.13.4; Mart. 12.57.14; Juvenal, 7.221; Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.4; 14.3.5.9; Paul. *Dig.* 14.3.4; Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 1.47.

<sup>28</sup> Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.4. For more on Vulgar Latin, see Herman 2000.

<sup>29</sup> For example, Aristophanes, *The Birds* 1292; Plato, *Protagoras* 313c; Dio Chrysostom, 8.9; 35.4; 35.15. Following the army: Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 4.5.42.3; Demosthenes, *Against Aristogiton* 1.46.1; Lucian, *How to Write History* 16.5; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 10.38.8 (10.431d).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the Classical Latin Texts database produced by the Packard Humanities Institute (<http://latin.packhum.org/>), containing almost the entirety of Latin literature up to AD 200, together with selected later authors.

Yet despite the issue of terminology, numerous food hawkers can be identified in ancient literature. We hear of sellers of figs,<sup>31</sup> fish,<sup>32</sup> vegetables,<sup>33</sup> grapes,<sup>34</sup> milk,<sup>35</sup> and hawkers of prepared food such as bread,<sup>36</sup> and hot food, including sausages, pastries, and dishes prepared with chickpeas.<sup>37</sup> Food hawkers appear in a variety of surviving ancient literature covering a wide range of genres, including letters, political and legal speeches, histories, plays, novels, love poetry, epigrams, and satire. The genre of a text is perhaps the most immediate consideration in how food hawkers are portrayed, as we might expect portrayals to be exaggerated for comic reasons in writings such as satire or epigrams, or for rhetorical reasons in, for example, political or legal speeches. Our surviving references are, however, too few to make any meaningful distinction between representations in different genres. Similarly, our references are found across a wide chronological span, ranging from the second century BC to the fourth century AD, yet are so scattered that any significant diachronic analysis of representations of food hawkers is impossible. In any case, food hawkers are portrayed in much the same vein across literary genres and chronological periods in the Roman world; they are for the most part portrayed negatively, or appear as incidental characters in the background of descriptions of other peoples or events.

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<sup>31</sup> Lucilius, 5.221-2; Cicero, *On Divination* 2.40.84.

<sup>32</sup> Plautus, *The Captives* 813-16.

<sup>33</sup> Horace, *Satires* 1.6.111-14; Petr. 6-7 (the old woman selling vegetables in this passage in fact turns out to be gathering custom for a nearby brothel). Female street vendors in early modern London were also often equated with prostitutes, see Krohn in this volume. See also Mayhew, *London Labour*, Vol. 1, p.134 for prostitutes in eighteenth-century London who masqueraded as flower sellers.

<sup>34</sup> Calp. *Ecl.* 5.97.

<sup>35</sup> Calp. *Ecl.* 4.25-26.

<sup>36</sup> Cicero, *Against Piso* 67.10; Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.9.

<sup>37</sup> Seneca, *Letters* 56.2; Mart. 1.41.5-10. The preparation of food often enables the highest profit margins, as value is added to raw materials through their transformation into a more saleable product.

If, as I have argued, food hawkers were such a ubiquitous part of the Roman street scene and a fundamental component of the distribution network of the city, why do they not appear more frequently in our literary sources, and why, when they do appear, do they tend to be portrayed negatively? There are numerous possible explanations for this. In terms of ancient literature, food hawkers are somewhat peripheral to the interests of most genres of poetry and prose, and although they may appear as background characters, their presence is taken as a given and not elaborated upon further. Furthermore, food hawkers were outside of the social world of the elite authors who produced our literature. Ancient literature essentially reflects the concerns of a tiny minority of wealthy, literate Romans; such people would not generally be found purchasing their food from hawkers in Rome. In fact, the elite ideal was self-sufficiency; food should be supplied directly to a household in Rome from a suburban or country estate, and purchasing food in the city implied that an estate was unable to meet the needs of the household adequately. Even staple items such as bread, which could not practically be imported into the city on a daily basis, should be produced within the household; hence Cicero derides Piso for buying his bread in public, the implication being that he does not have the means to produce bread within his own home.<sup>38</sup>

While the reality does not necessarily reflect the elite ideal - Ovid, for example, advises his readers to purchase food in the city and *pretend* that it was supplied directly from a suburban estate<sup>39</sup> - when such food was acquired in the city, it was more likely to be purchased from places such as *macella* than from food hawkers. *Macella* were purpose-built food markets that sold expensive delicacies to a wealthy clientele, and were particularly suited to the supply of quality food on the scale required for elite dinner parties, crucial events in the demonstration

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<sup>38</sup> Cicero, *Against Piso* 67.10.

<sup>39</sup> Ovid, *The Art of Love* 2.263-6. See also Mart. 7.31.

and acquisition of social and political status in Rome.<sup>40</sup> For smaller household meals and snacks, food hawkers may well have been used, but any such purchasing would have been done by dependents from the household, and so on the whole, direct engagement on the part of the elite with food hawkers was likely minimal in Rome.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, a general disdain for retailers pervades among our elite authors, since retail was equated primarily with deception and dishonesty. Cicero, for example, drawing on a Greek philosophical tradition, holds that while trade on a significant level is morally acceptable, purchasing goods solely to sell on is dishonest, since the value of the goods must be inflated falsely in order to make a profit.<sup>42</sup> As sellers of perishable goods, which must by their very nature be sold almost immediately, food hawkers are perhaps the ultimate example of retailers who sell goods to make a quick profit, however unfair this characterisation may be. More broadly, ancient attitudes to work in general may have influenced the representation of food hawkers in our literary sources. The Greek philosophical tradition regarded manual labour as

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<sup>40</sup> For more on the *macella* as a luxury food market, see Holleran, *Shopping*, pp. 160-81. Also Claire De Ruyt, *Macellum: marché alimentaire des Romains* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1983), pp. 341-50; 367-72.

<sup>41</sup> An exception to this is door to door sellers, who called on the houses of the wealthy, although these rarely appear as hawkers of food; see, for example, Horace, *Carmina* 3.6.30; *Epodes* 17.20; Propertius, 4.2.38; Ovid, *Remedies for Love* 305-6; Jerome, *Against Jovinianus* 1.47. Since such sellers visit houses directly and would have found women alone, they are often portrayed as a sexual threat by our male authors.

<sup>42</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* 1.1.50. Cicero is here following Panaetius: Peter Brunt, 'Aspects of the Social Thought of Dio Chrysostom and of the Stoics', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 19 (1973), pp.26-34. For the Greek philosophical tradition see, for example, Plato *Laws* 919d-920c; *Protagoras* 313c; Aristotle *Politics* 1.9-10, although the association of retail with deceit appears already in Herodotus (1.153.1-2). See also discussion in Leslie Kurke, 'Kapeleia and Deceit: Theognis 59-60', *American Journal of Philology* 110 (1989), pp. 535-44. For the continued influence of this idea into the twentieth century, see John Benson and Laura Ugolini, 'Introduction', in John Benson and Laura Ugolini (eds.), *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society since 1700* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 13-16.

banausic, that is, as harmful to body and soul.<sup>43</sup> Cicero again followed this convention in an often-quoted passage condemning manual labour, with the notable exception of agricultural work, an activity which is almost universally praised in Roman literature.<sup>44</sup> Cicero disapproves of wage labour in particular, arguing that selling one's labour is akin to slavery.

In practice, these attitudes were unlikely to have been prevalent outside of a narrow and privileged elite in Greece or Rome, and even within this group, the views expressed were inconsistent and not always compatible with their actions.<sup>45</sup> Certainly funerary commemorations recording occupations of the deceased indicate that for some sections of society at least, work was not shameful but was a central tenet of their identity. Furthermore, such reservations about manual labour or earning wages were not necessarily followed by Christian authors.<sup>46</sup> Yet the prevailing attitude among the elite still affects our literary record, since work was rarely discussed in a neutral fashion. In fact, references to work in Rome are very often found as part of political invective or satirical attacks; the emperor Augustus, for example, was taunted by accusations that he was descended from traders, with a banker, a rope

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<sup>43</sup> See Maurice Balme, 'Attitudes to work and leisure in ancient Greece', *Greece and Rome* 31 (1984). Also Brunt, 'Aspects of the Social Thought', pp. 11-12.

<sup>44</sup> Cicero, *On Duties* 1.150-151. For Roman attitudes, see Susan Treggiari, 'Urban Labour in Rome: *mercennarii* and *tabernarii*', in Peter Garnsey (ed.), *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 48-64; Sandra Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome. A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman, OK, 1992), pp. 63-69 (in Latin literature). In general, see also Alison Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society* (London, 1972), pp. 12-13; 25-26; 28-30.

<sup>45</sup> See Treggiari, 'Urban Labour', p. 57, n.2 for some inconsistencies in Cicero's own view. See also John H. D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981) for elite Romans profiting from commercial activities, at least indirectly. For the more nuanced view of Dio Chrysostom, see discussion in Brunt 'Aspects of the Social Thought'.

<sup>46</sup> For wage labour in the early Christian tradition, see David A. Fiensy, 'What Would You Do for a Living?', in Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime, and Paul-André Turcotte (eds.), *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (Walnut Creek, Oxford, 2002), p. 566; Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, 'Modes and Relations of Productions', *Ibid.*, p. 550.

maker, a perfume maker, and a baker among his ancestors.<sup>47</sup> Working for a living was not necessarily to be praised or admired. Retail was treated with particular disdain, and since food hawking was very often undertaken by some of the poorest and most marginalised in Rome, such traders were probably especially scorned. Some food hawkers were also of slave or freed status, which goes some way towards explaining their negative portrayal in our sources.<sup>48</sup> Food hawking was derided not only because it was in itself demeaning, but also because of the status of those who engaged in this activity; these two aspects were most likely mutually reinforcing from the point of view of the Roman elite.

Food hawkers were not likely, therefore, to have been viewed as worthy of much interest by the Roman elite; there was certainly no sympathetic character akin to Henry Mayhew to document the lives of street sellers in Rome. Furthermore, attitudes to work, and to retail in particular, significantly affected the representation of food hawkers in our literary sources. Street traders in general appear primarily as incidental characters, or as caricatures of vulgarity, as insults hurled at others; Martial, for example, degrades a certain Caecilius by accusing him of undertaking the meanest jobs in Rome, including the work of street traders.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, poor oratory is compared to the sales patter of street vendors. Pliny the Younger, for instance, likens Regulus' oratory to that of a seller in the forum (*circulator in foro*), while Martial compares an impersonator's poetry to the shouts of those who collect broken glass for recycling; these are not intended to be compliments.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, in his guide to oratory,

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<sup>47</sup> Suetonius, *Augustus* 2.3; 4.2. For similar accusations levelled at the emperors Vitellius and Vespasian, see Suetonius, *Vitellius* 2.1; *Vespasian* 1.2-4; at Cicero, see Dio Cassius 46.4-5; 7.4. See also Mart. 3.16; 3.59; 7.64.

<sup>48</sup> For example, Mart. 1.41.8; Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.9.

<sup>49</sup> Mart. 1.41.

<sup>50</sup> Pliny, *Letters* 4.7.6.4; Mart. 10.3.2. See also Petr. 68.6-7; *Historia Augusta*, *Commodus* 2.8.



Quintilian instructs his readers to aim at forceful oratory rather than the rapid speech of a street hawker (*circulator*).<sup>51</sup>

Yet although the context is pejorative, these representations of hawkers *are* useful in that they strongly hint at the performative aspect of street selling in Rome. That hawkers were active sellers of their goods is also suggested by the use of the term *circulator* to refer to both hawkers and street performers; both clearly provided an element of entertainment for their audience. This seems to be particularly true of food hawkers, who had distinctive cries to attract customers and enable them to stand out from their competitors. Seneca, for example, tells of the disturbance caused by the hawkers who frequent the bathhouse below his apartment in first-century Rome, describing the noise of the ‘pastry-cooks with their varied cries, the sausage dealer and the confectioner and all the vendors of food from the cookshops selling their wares, each with his own distinctive intonation’.<sup>52</sup> Similarly Martial talks about the noise of the ‘vendor of boiled chickpeas to the idle crowd...the salt-fishmongers’ worthless slaves and the bawling cook who hawks smoking sausages round stuffy bistros’, while elsewhere he complains about the noise of traders in Rome disturbing his sleep.<sup>53</sup> Cicero reports how a fig seller’s shout of *cauneas* (Caunean dried figs) at Brundisium was heard by soldiers embarking in ships to Parthia as *cave ne eas* (‘beware going’) and interpreted as a bad omen, while Calpurnius Siculus describes the loud cries of an urban milk hawker.<sup>54</sup>

Food hawkers appear as active sellers in surviving pictorial representations of sale also, although they are of course largely silent. A funerary monument from Narbonne, however, includes a seller’s sales cry alongside his image. The hawker is depicted with a basket of fruit

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<sup>51</sup> Quintilian, *On Oratory* 10.1.8; also 2.4.16.

<sup>52</sup> Seneca, *Letters* 56.2. For more on the provision of food in bathhouses, see also Mart. 5.70; 12.19; 12.70; Juvenal, 8.167.

<sup>53</sup> Mart. 1.41.5-10; 12.57. For the noise of Rome, see also Juvenal, 3.232-38

<sup>54</sup> Cicero, *On Divination* 2.40.84; Calp. *Ecl.* 4.25-26.

around his neck and next to him is inscribed the distinctive shout of '*mala! Mulieres, mulieres meae!*'. The performative aspect of the cry lies in the pronunciation of the first word. If the seller pronounced *mala* with a long 'a' in the first syllable, it would mean apples, while with a short 'a', it would mean troublesome; the second part of the phrase translates as women, my women, and the seller could thus implore 'his' women to buy his apples, or he could describe them as harmful.<sup>55</sup> The cries of food hawkers were no doubt a characteristic feature of the ancient city - and of Rome in particular - with sellers competing vigorously for customers. Yet in contrast to those who found the street cries of early modern London and Paris interesting enough to document and even to set to music, the Roman street cries are rarely recorded for their own sake; they are primarily remarked upon as another irritating aspect of urban life, or used as a means to malign the oratory of others.<sup>56</sup>

Legal sources are no more neutral in tone, and moreover, rarely show more than a passing interest in such traders. Roman Jurists were concerned primarily with the role of *institores*, many of whom were of servile status and were sent out from more permanent places to sell goods in public spaces and private homes.<sup>57</sup> Ulpian, for example, describes a baker sending out an *institor* daily to sell bread in a particular location, as well as tailors and cloth merchants entrusting cloth to *institores*, commonly known as *circitores*, to hawk and to sell;<sup>58</sup> the legal status of transactions undertaken by *institores* within the homes of the wealthy is also

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<sup>55</sup> Emilio Magaldi, *Il commercio ambulante a Pompei* (Naples, 1930), p. 15.

<sup>56</sup> For the street cries of early modern Paris, see Katie Scott, 'Edme Bouchardon's 'Cris de Paris': crying food in early modern Paris', *Word and Image: a Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 29.1 (2013), pp. 59-91. In this volume, see Krohn for street cries in Late Renaissance Europe and Janeja for contemporary Calcutta.

<sup>57</sup> *Institores* could technically be of any legal status (Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.7.1), but the legal writers tend to be concerned with those of servile status. For further discussion and references, see Holleran, *Shopping*, p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> Ulp. *Dig.* 14.3.5.4; 14.3.5.9.

considered.<sup>59</sup> Otherwise, there is little evidence in the legal sources for the regulation or licensing of hawkers, although there does appear to be a concern with keeping the streets passable, which presumably affected the size and positioning of stalls.<sup>60</sup> Ambulant hawkers present less of a problem, as their mobility means that they cause only a passing obstruction. They are also more difficult to control and regulate, since their constant movement enables them to evade the authorities more effectively than vendors with fixed stalls. In any case, even if prosecutions of food hawkers had taken place in ancient Rome, there would be no police or prosecution records to provide us with additional information about these sellers.<sup>61</sup>

The representation of food hawkers in our ancient literary sources clearly presents a challenge, as the concerns and attitudes of our authors mean that such vendors are rarely presented in a neutral manner. We cannot, of course, counter the elite view by interviewing food hawkers from ancient Rome in the manner of those who study such vendors in contemporary cities. Nevertheless, the literary sources do at least enable us to establish the presence of food hawkers in Rome, and go some way towards revealing the performative aspect of such sellers in the city. There are, however, other types of evidence that we can use to further illuminate the picture of vendors in Rome.

### **Artistic representations**

Several artistic representations of food hawkers, for example, survive from the Roman world.<sup>62</sup> None of these visual portrayals come from Rome itself, but were primarily found in Pompeii

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<sup>59</sup> Paul. *Dig.* 14.3.4.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Mart. 7.61; Papinian, *Digest* 43.10.1.4. For further discussion, see Holleran, *Shopping*, 214-15. Also see p.000 for local magistrates granting permission to certain stallholders to trade in the vicinity of the Pompeian amphitheatre.

<sup>61</sup> For control and documentation of street sellers in early modern London, see Krohn in this volume, and for eighteenth-century Naples, see Calaresu.

<sup>62</sup> For approaches to Roman art in the lives of those outside of the elite sphere in Rome, see John R. Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans* (Berkeley, 2003). Also Peter Stewart, *The Social History of Roman Art* (Cambridge, 2008).

and Ostia, whose particular histories have enabled better preservation of their Roman remains, although such depictions are equally evocative of the sellers in Rome. The pictures are not, however, necessarily to be taken as merely illustrative of Roman street sellers; as with our literary sources, these are representations of hawkers, the interpretation of which requires further thought and analysis.

Four small statuettes (c.25cm high), found stored in the remains of a carbonised chest in the house of P. Cornelius Tages at Pompeii (I.7.10-12; also known as the house of the Ephebus), are some of the more intriguing visual representations of food hawkers (see Figure 1.1);<sup>63</sup> as with all finds at Pompeii, these items were buried in the eruption of Vesuvius and therefore can be dated no later than AD 79. The original function of these statuettes is unknown, but since the figures hold small silver trays in their hands, it has been thought that they were used as a novel means to serve delicacies at dinner parties, with their striking appearance presumably acting as a talking point among the guests.<sup>64</sup> The statuettes are conventionally referred to as the *placentarii*, a late Latin term referring to pastry-cooks or confectioners. Although the name is a modern invention of the archaeologist Maiuri, the figures probably are intended to represent ambulant hawkers, perhaps of pastries or bread, although other wares could be carried on the trays.<sup>65</sup> These are, however, by no means realistic

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<sup>63</sup> Now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli: Inv 143758-61.

<sup>64</sup> Stefano De Caro, *Il Gabinetto segreto del museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli: guida alla collezione* (Naples, 2000), p. 60.

<sup>65</sup> Magaldi, *Il commercio ambulante*, p. 11; 28-29; De Caro, *Il Gabinetto segreto*, p. 60. Another possibility is that these are intended to be representations of slaves holding out trays of food for guests at dinner parties, but their coarse appearance suggests otherwise; literature of this period emphasises the physical beauty and elegant dress of table servants, something which can also be seen in late antique artistic representations of such people. Table servants are also silent, whereas the Pompeian statuettes are clearly shown in the process of shouting. For further discussion of representations of waiting staff, primarily in later Roman art, see Katherine Dunbabin, 'The waiting servant in later Roman art', *American Journal of Philology* 124 (2003), pp. 443-67.

depictions of hawkers. The figures are heavily caricatured, and are naked, in a parody of a heroic nude; they are elderly, skinny, and bearded, depicted in the process of straining to shout, with their mouths open and their hands to their throats. As in our literary sources, the performative aspect of the sellers' work is clear.

**[Figure 1.1 here – full page - portrait]**

Perhaps most striking to a modern audience are the exaggerated phalluses of the hawkers. This feature of the figures would probably be less arresting to an ancient audience, as phallic imagery abounded at Pompeii; representations of erect phalluses in particular were common, and were not intended to be erotic images, but were thought to have apotropaic powers, protecting the residents from harm.<sup>66</sup> The phalluses on the hawkers, however, are not erect, and were probably intended above all to incite a humorous response in the viewer.<sup>67</sup> They are in fact reminiscent of the phalluses worn by actors in Old Attic Comedy and probably also in fourth-century Magna Graecia.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the large phalluses are part of the overall characterisation of the hawkers; the Romans followed the Greeks in an aesthetic preference for small phalluses, and this feature thus marks the sellers out as crass figures and is a further element in their marginalisation.<sup>69</sup> The contrast between these statuettes and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European representations of street sellers is striking.<sup>70</sup> The Roman figures

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<sup>66</sup> See, for example, John R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 BC – AD 250* (Berkeley, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> For representations of enormous phalluses with humorous intent, see Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, p.131; 134.

<sup>68</sup> For this comic costume, see Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), p. 131.

<sup>69</sup> For the Roman aesthetic taste for small phalluses, see discussion in Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, pp. 134; 136; 209-212. Also in the Greek tradition: Dover *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 125-135.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Isabelle Baudino, 'Eighteenth-century images of working women', in Isabelle Baudino, Jacques Carré, and Cécile Révauger (eds.), *The Invisible Women: Aspects of Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 173-182, for idealised representations of women in eighteenth-century engravings of female street sellers, particularly those of Wheatley. See also Stammers in this volume for the representation of street sellers in nineteenth-century Paris.

were similarly expensive – made from gilded bronze and furnished with silver trays – but rather than the idealised and somewhat sentimentalised representations of later Europe, these are comic figures; they ridicule the hawkers who must have been a familiar sight on the streets of Pompeii for the entertainment of wealthy dinner party guests. The statuettes rather neatly reflect the attitudes to food hawkers in our ancient literature.

Other visual representations of food hawkers from the Roman world are more neutral in their portrayal of sellers. A frieze from the atrium of the house of Julia Felix at Pompeii (II.4), for example, depicts food hawkers as part of a series of scenes set in the Pompeian forum (see Figure 1.2). The paintings, now on display in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, include depictions of legal judgements and business transactions taking place, a school pupil being punished, people reading public notices, numerous mules making deliveries, people chatting, a beggar, and various scenes of sale.<sup>71</sup> We see, for example, men in tunics showing cloth to women, while elsewhere other women are seated on benches examining lengths of cloth held by sellers. There is a man selling metal vessels, displayed on the ground around him; he bangs the inside of one his vessels with a stick, either to demonstrate its quality or to attract attention. Behind him, a man sits at an anvil and beats a container with a hammer. A seller of shoes has marked out a space with curtains, and numerous customers are seated on benches; the seller stands in the middle of the display of shoes and appears to be in the process of mending a shoe that he is holding in his right hand.

**[Figure 1.2 here – half page – landscape]**

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<sup>71</sup> Inventory numbers: 9057; 9059; 9061-62; 9064; 9066-68; 9070. For a detailed description of each of the panels, with good quality reproductions, see Salvatore Ciro Nappo, 'Fregio dipinto dal *praedium* di Giulia Felice con rappresentazione del foro di Pompei', *Rivista di studi pompeiani* 3 (1989), 79-96; also Pietro Giovanni Guzzo 'Sul fregio figurato *praedia* di Giulia Felice di Pompei (II, 4. 3)', in Marina Sapelli Ragni (ed.), *Studi di archeologia in memoria di Liliana Mercado* (Turin, 2005), pp. 102-113.

Food hawkers, however, dominate the scenes of sale. A bread seller displays his wares on a wooden table and in a basket on the ground, while another temporary stall holds fruit and vegetables; further baskets on the floor hold what appear to be figs. Hot food is sold from a large cauldron suspended over a fire and the seller uses tongs to hold a small bowl of food drawn from the cauldron for a customer. A man is also shown seated next to a low table on which he displays his wares; it is unclear exactly what he is selling, but it may be food, since a customer is passing him a bowl to be filled and on the floor are various other vessels, from one of which protrudes a serving implement.<sup>72</sup> Almost all of the sellers in these particular scenes are male, although many of the customers are female, suggesting that women were active participants in the community of Pompeii; elsewhere in the town, women also appear as sellers, as for example the woman shown behind a counter selling felt objects at the workshop of Verecundus (IX.7.5-7).<sup>73</sup>

A colonnade runs behind all the scenes, demonstrating that the setting is to be understood as the forum. The architectonic details do not, however, exactly mirror those of the Pompeian forum, and are presumably intended to be representative, rather than a faithful

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<sup>72</sup> Identified as a food stall: Helen Tanzer, *The Common People of Pompeii. A Study of the Graffiti* (Baltimore, 1939), p. 30. Others have plausibly identified the items on the table as metal tools. See, for example, Guzzo, 'Sul fregio figurato', p. 107; Nappo, 'Fregio dipinto', p. 88. See also Magaldi, *Il commercio ambulante*, p. 25, who calls the seller a *scrutarius*, a dealer in second-hand goods.

<sup>73</sup> The vegetable seller is the only one who could potentially be female, although the gender is disputed; Nappo ('Fregio dipinto', p. 86), for example, describes the seller as male, while Natalie Kampen, 'Social status and gender in Roman art: the case of the saleswoman', in Eve D'Ambra (ed.), *Roman Art in Context: an Anthology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993), p. 66 argues that the seller is female. For a detailed description of the painting of a female seller from the workshop of Verecundus, see Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, pp. 105-112. For more on women and retail in Roman Italy, see Claire Holleran, 'Women and retail in Roman Italy', in Emily Hemelrijk and Greg Woolf (eds.), *Gender and the Roman City: Women and Civic Life in the Western Provinces* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 313-330.

reproduction.<sup>74</sup> A similar approach must be taken to the scenes themselves. While other depictions of trade that are found within domestic settings at Pompeii may add a fantastical or mythological element - such as the famous paintings in the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1) in which workers are portrayed as Cupids and Psyche - the artist of the forum scenes paints images that would be instantly recognisable to the ancient viewer.<sup>75</sup> This is genre painting, intended to represent a typical and recognisable scene, but not to document faithfully any one particular person or event.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps not all of these events would ordinarily take place at the same time, but the overall aim of the artist was to capture the bustling nature of the Pompeian forum through a depiction of the activities that would occur within that setting. Since the pleasure for the viewer comes from the familiarity of the scene, the artist would surely focus on the typical rather than the atypical. In a similar manner, many early modern prints of street sellers appear to have been drawn from figures posed in a studio rather than produced from sketches of genuine hawkers done on the streets, but the intention was to produce a staged representation of reality.<sup>77</sup> Above all, the frieze is decorative, but from our point of view, the pictures indicate the type of food that would be available for sale in the Pompeian forum, and by extension, in the public areas of other Roman towns and cities, including Rome itself; this includes fruit, vegetables, bread, and prepared food.

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<sup>74</sup> Guzzo 'Sul fregio figurato', p. 108; Nappo, 'Fregio dipinto', pp. 94-95. It would in any case have been difficult for an ancient viewer to make out many of the smaller details in the frieze, since it was only about 60cm high and was initially displayed at a height of around 240 cm from the ground. These figures are taken from Clarke (*Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, p. 96), although Nappo ('Fregio dipinto', pp. 92-93) gives a height of 73cm for the frieze itself, and places it 247cm from the ground.

<sup>75</sup> For the paintings from the House of the Vettii, see Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, pp. 98-105.

<sup>76</sup> For early modern examples of genre paintings of markets and street sellers, see Krohn in this volume.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Scott, 'Edme Bouchardon's 'Cris de Paris'', pp. 65-66.



Not all artistic representations of Pompeian hawkers, however, are to be found in the context of genre paintings. The depiction of the riot in the amphitheatre, for example, documents a specific event in Pompeii's history, which took place in AD 59 when residents of the nearby town of Nuceria visited Pompeii to attend gladiatorial games and clashed with the townspeople in the amphitheatre.<sup>78</sup> In the foreground of this picture, the artist painted a number of temporary stalls, with sales areas marked out and shaded by curtains hung between trees or attached to stakes in the ground; a more permanent wooden structure can also be seen. The painting is not detailed enough to see what the vendors are selling, especially as many appear to have been overrun by rioters, but given the concentration of hungry consumers in the vicinity of the amphitheatre, many of these sellers were likely to have been food hawkers; some perhaps also sold gladiatorial programmes of the type mentioned by Cicero.<sup>79</sup> The pictorial evidence can to a certain extent be corroborated by the archaeological material. Traces of writing survive on the exterior of the amphitheatre at Pompeii, where traders marked out their spaces for stalls; permission to trade was granted by the aediles, local town magistrates.<sup>80</sup> Given the potential profit to be made, such trading spaces were probably jealously guarded, but temporary stalls would surely have been supplemented by numerous ambulant hawkers taking advantage of the demand for food and other goods generated by those attending the games.

Several stone reliefs depicting food sellers also survive. A marble relief from Ostia, for example, dating to the late second-century AD, shows a vegetable seller behind a trestle table; underneath is a large basket in which the seller must have transported the stock (see Figure

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<sup>78</sup> An event recorded by Tacitus (*Annals*, 14.17). The painting is now on display in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli: inv. 112222. For a discussion, with further bibliography (although no mention of the scenes of trade), see Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, pp. 152-58.

<sup>79</sup> Cicero, *Philippics*, 2.97.3.

<sup>80</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (hereafter *CIL*) IV 1096a-b; 1097; 1097a-b; 1115.

1.3).<sup>81</sup> The contents of the table are deliberately displayed to the viewer and include several different types of vegetables. Further vegetables are displayed on stepped shelves, which are to be understood either as resting on the table, or perhaps as part of some more permanent furniture. Thus while the trestle table clearly suggests a temporary arrangement, the shelves may hint at something more permanent here, making the context of the scene difficult to interpret. This issue is compounded by the fact that the provenance of the relief is unknown, meaning that its original function is difficult to know. The relief is small (c. 50cm by 35 cm), and was perhaps initially part of a funerary monument, or was intended to mark out a place of sale, forming a visual marker of the seller's usual location. It has also been suggested that it was used as a shop sign, in which case, the relief would depict the interior of a shop, rather than a market stall or a street vendor;<sup>82</sup> without the original context, it is impossible to fully understand the meaning of the scene. Indeed, it may have been primarily decorative in function, in the manner of the paintings from the house of Julia Felix.

**[Figure 1.3 here – full page – portrait]**

The features of the seller are indistinct and the clothes could be worn by either a male or female, but given the lack of a beard, the seller is generally identified as a woman, although some ambiguity remains.<sup>83</sup> The seller is shown in the centre of the relief, standing behind the counter, with one hand touching the produce, and the other hand raised as though to attract the attention of passersby, with the thumb and the first two fingers extended in what was a common oratorical gesture.<sup>84</sup> As with the scenes of sale from the house of Julia Felix at Pompeii, there

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<sup>81</sup> For a more detailed description of this relief, see Natalie Kampen, *Image and Status: Roman Working Women in Ostia* (Berlin, 1981), pp. 59-64.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Raissa Calza, *Museo Ostiense* (Rome, 1962), p. 21.

<sup>83</sup> For the seller as female, see, for example, Kampen, *Image and Status*, pp. 59-64.

<sup>84</sup> Apul. *Met.* 2.21; Kampen, *Image and Status*, p. 62.

are no mythological elements or particular symbolism to be understood in this depiction of a food vendor.

**[Figure 1.4 here - half page – landscape]**

A second Ostian relief of a similar date shows a female poultry seller behind a stall made out of cages in which her stock of live poultry and rabbits (or hares) is stored (see Figure 1.4).<sup>85</sup> Next to the stall, two dead birds are shown hanging from a post. Also on the stall are two bowls of fruit, perhaps figs, and a large wooden barrel with two holes; a snail carved next to the barrel is presumably intended to indicate its contents. To the far side of the barrel sit two monkeys who are looking directly at the viewer and are presumably intended to attract and entertain customers, again highlighting the performative aspect of food sale and the crossover between hawkers and entertainers. The woman behind the counter is accompanied by an assistant, and to the side of the cages are three male figures. One holds a dead rabbit and appears to be engaged in a discussion with a second man beside him, who has his arms open in gesticulation and is perhaps another seller. The third figure is being served by the female seller, who hands him some fruit with one hand, while her other hand touches the fruit in one of the bowls, a gesture similar to that adopted by the Ostian vegetable seller. The figure being served by the woman is noticeably smaller than the other two men, enabling the viewer to see the dead poultry hanging behind the customer, while also emphasising the high position of the woman. The small size of the seller may be a stylistic compromise, although it is worth noting that this may also say something about the status of the figure, since in Roman art, slave status is often demonstrated by size in relation to others.<sup>86</sup> As with the vegetable seller, the intended function of the relief is unknown, although a little more is known about its provenance. It was found

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<sup>85</sup> For more detailed discussions, see Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, pp. 123-25; Kampen, *Image and Status*, pp. 52-59.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Dunbabin, 'The Waiting Servant', p. 445.

by excavators in a building along the Via della Foce at Ostia, a major route through the city, but its original placement remains unknown.

A similar relief from second-century Arlon, this time certainly funerary in context, shows two fruit sellers behind a trestle table covered with fruit;<sup>87</sup> as in the relief of the Ostian vegetable seller, the baskets used to carry the produce are depicted underneath the table. Indeed, Kampen suggests that the trestle table was particularly associated with the sale of food, perhaps because the quick turnaround of items such as fresh fruit and vegetables meant that these were best suited to sale from temporary stalls.<sup>88</sup> Certainly the baskets and the trestle tables emphasise the transient nature of these stalls. Another characteristic motif of these reliefs is that the seller is placed behind a stall, creating a clear separation between them and the customer. Perhaps even more noticeable is that the sellers are all shown to be touching their produce, as though inviting their customers to do the same. Such motifs appear to have become part of the vocabulary of visual representations of food hawkers, and mark the vendors out once again as active sellers. The funerary relief of a hawker from Narbonne is of a different nature, since the fruit seller is shown carrying his wares in a basket that hangs around his neck on a strap, but the performative aspect of his trade is similarly highlighted, in this case by the inclusion of the hawker's cry alongside his image. Furthermore, sellers tend to be depicted wearing simple practical clothes such as tunics, while customers wear a wider variety of clothes, included the *togae* and *stolae* typical of wealthier Romans.<sup>89</sup> Notably, none of the surviving reliefs include any mythological elements, nor does there appear to be any hidden political or religious symbolism in the depictions of food hawkers. Thus despite the sharing of some common motifs and elements of composition, the reliefs must have been intended as

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<sup>87</sup> Musée Archéologique Luxembourgeois, Inv. No. 49 (Pilier du Cultivateur).

<sup>88</sup> Kampen, *Image and Status*, p. 62.

<sup>89</sup> Kampen, 'Social Status and Gender', pp. 118-20.

realistic portrayals of sellers. They can, therefore, be taken as illustrative of the form that food stalls took, and the sorts of goods that were sold.

Such reliefs appear to be almost entirely without Greek precedents and are part of a tradition of depicting scenes of work that flourished primarily in the western part of the Roman empire in the first to the third centuries AD.<sup>90</sup> The majority of reliefs showing work activities were found on funerary monuments, and were thus part of the self-representation of the deceased. The Ciceronian distaste for work was clearly not shared by all, although it is notable that work as a mark of identity is most prevalent among freedmen, who could become wealthy but were excluded from many of the more traditional markers of status.<sup>91</sup> Funerary inscriptions recording occupational titles are also demonstrative of the pride that some took in their work; such commemorations are in fact far more numerous than artistic representations of work, since the latter were understandably more expensive to produce.<sup>92</sup>

Yet food hawkers seldom appear in our epigraphic record. Given that much of the terminology used to denote food hawkers in our literary sources was rather make-shift, ambiguous, and primarily a part of ‘Vulgar Latin’, it is perhaps unsurprising that we do not see people adopting such terms as part of their identity or self-representation. The only term that does appear in inscriptions is *institor*, a more formal legal term, but even this appears only a

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<sup>90</sup> Kampen, *Image and Status*, pp. 83-98. Also Michel Reddé, ‘Les scènes de métier dans la sculpture funéraire Gallo-Romaine’, *Gallia* 36 (1978), pp. 43-63. For a catalogue of Roman images of work, see Gerhard Zimmer, *Römische Berufsdarstellungen* (Berlin, 1982).

<sup>91</sup> See Michele George, ‘Social identity and the dignity of work in freedmen’s reliefs’, in Eve D’Ambra and Guy P. R. Métraux (eds.), *The Art of Citizens, Soldiers, and Freedmen in the Roman World* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 22-28. Also Lauren Hackworth Peterson, *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 114-117; 190-91.

<sup>92</sup> For a study of occupational inscriptions from Rome, see Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*. See also Nicolas Tran, ‘La mention épigraphique des métiers artisanaux et commerciaux dans l’épigraphie de l’Italie centro-méridionale’, in Jean Andreau and Véronique Chanowski (eds.), *Vocabulaire et expression de l’économie dans le monde antique* (Pessac, 2007), pp. 119-41.

handful of times on funerary commemorations across the Roman empire, and never specifically referring to the sale of food.<sup>93</sup> The low status attached to such terms perhaps goes some way towards explaining why they rarely appear as titles on funerary monuments. Indeed, although the elite disdain for work does not appear to have been common throughout Roman society, the literary terms by which food hawkers are defined are probably not those by which the workers would have chosen to define themselves. Perhaps more pertinently, the urban economy of Rome was structured in such a way that many food hawkers were among the poorest in the city. They were, therefore, unlikely to have been in a position to pay for even the most basic of commemorations and would largely be absent from the epigraphic record, leaving no physical trace of their existence.

## Conclusion

Our literary representations of hawkers are clearly subjective, since they represent the viewpoint of a wealthy elite educated in a philosophical tradition that taught them to condemn retailers as dishonest and to elevate the self-sufficient lifestyle of those who lived off the produce of their land. Hawkers appear only when they can be a useful tool to writers, for example, as a means to disparage the oratorical skills of others, as shorthand for vulgarity, or to provide background to an everyday scene; they are rarely discussed in any detail, since the character presented is one that is readily understood by their audience, requiring no further explanation. Aside from the Pompeian statuettes with the exaggerated phalluses, which rather neatly encapsulate the literary representation of food hawkers in a visual form, depictions of hawkers in paintings and reliefs are generally more neutral. They show sellers in a more

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<sup>93</sup> See Jean-Jacques Aubert *Business Managers in Ancient Rome: A Social and Economic Study of Institores, 200 BC – AD 250* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 30-32 for a discussion of the rarity of the title *institor* on epitaphs; the term appears three times in Italy (*CIL* VI 10007; *CIL* XI 1621 (both perfume); *CIL* IX 3027 (cobblers) and twice in the rest of the empire (*CIL* III 13523 (Britain); *CIL* III 14206 (Macedonia)). cf. Tran, 'La mention épigraphique', p. 129.

realistic light as a typical part of urban street life, although these cannot be taken as ‘documentary’ evidence either; they are representations of sellers, appearing as part of genre paintings, or in the case of the Ostian reliefs, perhaps as place markers for stalls, as shop signs, or as images of the deceased on funerary monuments.

The ancient evidence may then be partial and not always easy to interpret, but both the literary and the visual representations indicate that food hawkers – and hawkers of a wide variety of other goods – were an integral part both of Roman street life and the urban distribution network. Fresh food, such as fruit, vegetables, and milk were offered for sale, as were prepared food items, such as bread, sausages, and pastries. We can also see that sellers worked from behind stalls or on foot, moving around to take advantage of concentrations of consumers. Venues such as amphitheatres, theatres, bathhouses, and temples were important hubs of trade, with hawkers congregating where potential customers could be found. Food hawkers were also lively sellers of their wares, encouraging customers through vocal advertisements of their products, offering colourful entertainment as well as sustenance. Although our ancient sources show little interest in the lives of food hawkers, comparative material can provide some valuable models to help explain the phenomenon of food hawking in Rome, linking the presence of such sellers to wider issues in the social and economic environment of the city. Despite the frequent vilification of hawkers in our ancient sources, and their relative invisibility in the archaeological record, with careful consideration of the evidence, it is possible to go some way towards reconstituting the place of food vendors within the wider urban economy, and to discover more about some of these most marginalised people in Roman society.